

COCOA TODAY (FL)  
16 July 1985

# ***Retired CIA official: U.S. misunderstood the enemy***

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Ten years after the fall of Saigon, intelligence experts still disagree about how much American leaders knew — or should have known — about the enemy and how this affected the war, a retired CIA official said Monday.

Thomas Polgar of Maitland, a defense and intelligence consultant, worked as the CIA's station chief in Saigon for three years before it was taken by communist forces in 1975.

"I feel very keenly that we were defeated, and there are several key reasons why," said

Polgar, who addressed the Cape Canaveral chapter of the Retired Officers Association meeting at Patrick Air Force Base.

"There was a disregard of available intelligence . . . One of the basic lessons of intelligence is that nobody likes to listen to bad news," Polgar said.

"Henry Kissinger once told me that intelligence is good when it 'supports my policy.' "

American leaders were hampered by their lack of understanding of the enemy, Polgar said.

"These were well-armored

North Vietnamese forces . . . and we knew that," he said.

In addition, policy makers seemed bound by the objections of friends as well as protesters, Polgar said.

"It all leads back to one question: How good is our intelligence, and are we sufficiently well-informed?"

Polgar declined to discuss ways in which the CIA gathered information about the Viet Cong and its supplies and soldiers.

He criticized current intelligence workers, saying they are poorly prepared for similar situations that may arise today in a world laced with terrorism.

"Our counting of Soviet hardware is very good using overhead photography and other spy techniques," he said.

But poorly educated CIA applicants who lack adequate history and language training make the U.S. intelligence corps weak, Polgar said.